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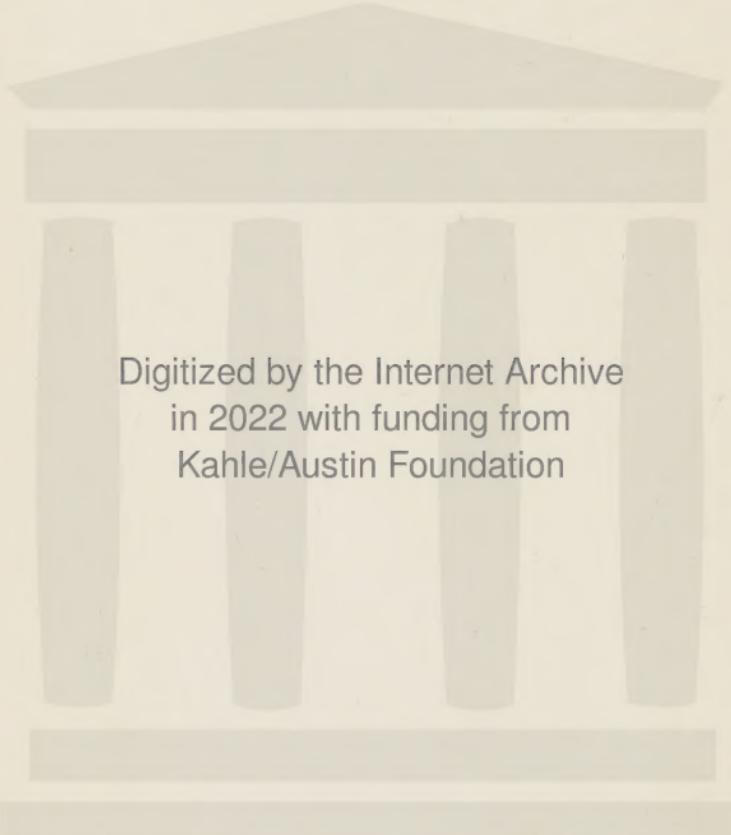




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IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

BY

ARTHUR DOYLE



D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
NEW YORK & LONDON & MCMXXV

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IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

CAST

THE PROLOGUE
THE SHE-ANGLE
THE HE-ANGLE
THE PLAYWRIGHT
THE POET
THE NOVELIST
THE ACTRESS
THE HUSBAND, *another He-Angle*

(*The PROLOGUE steps before the curtain. He is dressed in tights, etc., and carries a trumpet.*)

PROLOGUE

Do you know who I am? Yes, I'm the Prologue. I'm not really the Prologue: I am really the Exposition. But they put tights on me and gave me this (*indicating the trumpet*) and called me the Prologue. I can't play a trumpet, but it goes well with my tights and looks good, and besides it's something to lean on while I'm standing over there. Yes, I stand there during the whole play. It's that kind of play.

There, I've told you! Yes, you're going to see a play of a sort. Maybe it won't be much of a play. That will depend on how much of a help you are. I suppose I've got to explain. That is part of my duties as the Exposition.

You see last night a young man (he must have been

a very young man) dreamed a dream. I don't mean that you can dream anything but a dream, but it is better to say "dreamed a dream" than to say simply, "he dreamed." Now, this young man dreamed about triangles—not the kind he ought to have dreamed about as a student of higher mathematics and a very young man—but the other kind. He must have been pretty much of a playgoer, this young man.

As I say, he dreamed of triangles. He dreamed of a man and a wife and another man. That's what is known as a triangle, you know. He didn't give much time to the husband, but he did get the wife and the other man into a terrible mess. He made them fall in love, and he was just about to solve the problem of how he was going to get rid of the husband—that's always the problem of triangles, you know—when he woke up.

Do you see the difficulty? Here are two angles, desperately in love, and they haven't yet found out how they can get rid of the husband angle. And, moreover—but no, I've been enough Exposition for the present. If anything comes up that you don't understand, I'll try to make it clear to you. I'll be right over here if you want me. If you're all ready, we'll begin. Just remember that you're to help the angles if you can, please!

(He walks to one side and folds his arms. The curtains part, revealing a blank wall of curtains in the rear. Before curtains are three high stools. On left stool the SHE-ANGLE sits and on right stool the HE-ANGLE, leaving the center stool vacant.)

HE-ANGLE

Well?

SHE-ANGLE (*shortly*)

I didn't say anything.

IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

HE-ANGLE

Oh!

(*Pause.*)

SHE-ANGLE

What?

HE-ANGLE

I didn't say anything.

SHE-ANGLE

Oh!

(*Pause.*)

HE-ANGLE

This isn't getting us anywhere.

SHE-ANGLE

That's right. Blame it on me!

HE-ANGLE

Who's blaming it on you?

SHE-ANGLE

You are!

HE-ANGLE

I'm not!

SHE-ANGLE

You are!

HE-ANGLE

I'm not!

SHE-ANGLE

I say you are.

HE-ANGLE

I'm— Oh, well, have it your own way. But, after all, it isn't getting us anywhere, is it?

SHE-ANGLE

Who said it was?

IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

HE-ANGLE

That's right. Blame it on me!

SHE-ANGLE

Who's blaming it on you?

HE-ANGLE

You are.

SHE-ANGLE

I'm not!

HE-ANGLE

You— Oh, there we go again. (*Gets off chair and paces across stage.*) After all, it *isn't* getting us anywhere.

SHE-ANGLE

Well, I've done all I could.

HE-ANGLE

What have you done?

SHE-ANGLE

I've done everything I could.

HE-ANGLE

So I heard you say. But what have you done?

SHE-ANGLE

I've racked my brains for days, if you want to know.

HE-ANGLE

Oh, surely, it didn't take all that.

SHE-ANGLE

All what?

HE-ANGLE

Days.

SHE-ANGLE (*beginning to sob*)

There! You're just like all men. Oh! And I thought you different.

IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

HE-ANGLE

Oh, come now! I say, there isn't any reason for that.

SHE-ANGLE

Oh, no! You'd say not. You would.

HE-ANGLE

Well, what did I say?

SHE-ANGLE

You said— (*Sobs.*)—You said I didn't have any brains.

HE-ANGLE

I didn't!

SHE-ANGLE

You did.

HE-ANGLE

I didn't.

SHE-ANGLE (*sobbing*)

You did!

HE-ANGLE

Oh, well. (*He goes over to her and takes her hand.*) I'm sorry. Really, I am, if I said it, but I don't think I did.

SHE-ANGLE (*brightening*)

Well, you did.

HE-ANGLE

I'm sorry. (*Puts arm about her.*) I am like all men, I guess.

SHE-ANGLE

What do you mean by that?

HE-ANGLE

Oh, nothing. But what are you going to do about it?

IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

SHE-ANGLE

I've been trying to tell you all along, if you'd only let me.

HE-ANGLE

What have you been trying to tell me?

SHE-ANGLE

What I'm going to do about it.

HE-ANGLE

Oh!

SHE-ANGLE

What?

HE-ANGLE

Nothing. I just said "Oh"!

SHE-ANGLE

Oh!

(Pause.)

HE-ANGLE

Well?

SHE-ANGLE

I didn't say anything.

HE-ANGLE

Oh!

(Pause.)

SHE-ANGLE

You see, I will not just run away from my husband.
I say I won't!

HE-ANGLE

No! Certainly not. But what are you going to do?
You know I love you. Where do I come in?

SHE-ANGLE

Well, I've sent for a playwright.

IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

HE-ANGLE

Oh!

SHE-ANGLE

Yes.

HE-ANGLE

But what good is a playwright?

SHE-ANGLE

Why, don't you see? To get us out of this mess.

HE-ANGLE

But what *good* is he?

SHE-ANGLE

Why, don't you see?

HE-ANGLE

No.

SHE-ANGLE

Why, playwrights have to do with angles, and triangles, and all that sort of thing. He should be able to help us.

HE-ANGLE

Oh!

(*Pause.*)

SHE-ANGLE

Well?

HE-ANGLE

I didn't say anything.

SHE-ANGLE

Oh!

(*Pause.*)

SHE-ANGLE

But I think you might.

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HE-ANGLE

Might what?

SHE-ANGLE

Say something. What do you think of it—my plan?

HE-ANGLE

Oh! it's all right, I guess.

SHE-ANGLE

You guess!

(Looks as if on the verge of tears.)

HE-ANGLE

Why, of course it is. It's fine; that's what it is. It's great! But suppose he won't be able to help us?

SHE-ANGLE

He—*(Looks off left.)*—Here he comes! He will! *(Enter PLAYWRIGHT from left. Both HE-ANGLE and SHE-ANGLE look at him curiously. HE-ANGLE goes back to his stool.)*

PLAYWRIGHT

You sent for me?

SHE-ANGLE

So you're really a playwright! Oh!

PLAYWRIGHT

Well, rather. You sent for me?

SHE-ANGLE

Yes. I sent for you.

PLAYWRIGHT

Well?

HE-ANGLE }
SHE-ANGLE } *(together)*

I didn't say anything.

PLAYWRIGHT

But what did you send for me for?

SHE-ANGLE

I told you that—in my letter. You know—my husband. We've got to get free from him.

PLAYWRIGHT

Oh, yes! Husband—triangle. H'm.

SHE-ANGLE

I thought that you, being a playwright—

PLAYWRIGHT

Yes, yes, of course.

SHE-ANGLE

You see, it's really a very serious matter.

PLAYWRIGHT

H'm! Oh, not so serious!

HE-ANGLE

But what are we going to do about it?

PLAYWRIGHT

Not so fast, young man! Don't be impatient.

HE-ANGLE

But we're tired just being—angles.

PLAYWRIGHT

Of course. H'm! Have you told him?

SHE-ANGLE

Whom?

PLAYWRIGHT

Why, your husband.

SHE-ANGLE

No.

PLAYWRIGHT

No, of course not. But it is all very plain.

HE-ANGLE

What is all very plain?

PLAYWRIGHT

It's all very simple. All you have to do is to run away.

HE-ANGLE {
SHE-ANGLE } Run away!

PLAYWRIGHT

Why, of course. Together!

SHE-ANGLE

But—but the scandal.

PLAYWRIGHT

Ah, of course—the scandal. Wonderful! Think of it. The whole town talking. Ah, Pinero! Everyone that's worth while. Of course!

SHE-ANGLE

But I don't want them to talk!

PLAYWRIGHT

Don't be foolish! Think of the dialogue!

HE-ANGLE

The what?

PLAYWRIGHT

The dialogue. Think of what people will say! Sparkling, eh, what! Scintillating! Think of it! Ah, Wilde!

SHE-ANGLE

But I don't want them to talk!

PLAYWRIGHT

Well, of all the—! But they will talk!

HE-ANGLE

No!

PLAYWRIGHT

Yes! Of course they will. Do you think they're fools? If they didn't talk, why—why there wouldn't

be any sense to triangles. You angles must take the consequences. If you must angle, you must be talked about.

SHE-ANGLE

No! I refuse!

HE-ANGLE

Certainly not!

(Pause.)

PLAYWRIGHT

Well, then, if you insist on shutting out dialogue. There—have you thought of— How is your husband?

SHE-ANGLE

Why, well, thank you! Why— What do you mean?

PLAYWRIGHT

I mean—doesn't he have anything?

SHE-ANGLE

Doesn't he have anything?

PLAYWRIGHT

Why, yes—apoplexy or locomotor ataxia, or diabetes, or something?

SHE-ANGLE

Why—why, no!

PLAYWRIGHT

Pshaw, that's too bad.

SHE-ANGLE

But I don't know what you mean!

PLAYWRIGHT

Why, don't you see? If he had something, he'd be bound to die at the right moment—which is now. Sort of an unwritten law among husbands, you know.

They always do. They're bound to in such cases as this—if everything else fails.

SHE-ANGLE

Well, he won't.

HE-ANGLE

No, he's healthy as a fool! Besides, he wouldn't have the decency.

SHE-ANGLE

He would! He would die, if he could. I know he would!

HE-ANGLE

He wouldn't! He's too mean!

SHE-ANGLE

He isn't! Besides, I don't want him to die.

HE-ANGLE

Who said you did?

SHE-ANGLE

You did!

HE-ANGLE

I didn't!

SHE-ANGLE

You *did!* You *did!* You *did!*

HE-ANGLE

Oh, well!

PLAYWRIGHT

Come now, this isn't getting us anywhere. We're not through yet. There's still another chance.

HE-ANGLE }
SHE-ANGLE } (together)

What is it?

PLAYWRIGHT

Hire a yacht!

IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

SHE-ANGLE

A yacht?

PLAYWRIGHT

Of course. Hire a yacht and get shipwrecked.

SHE-ANGLE

Oh!

HE-ANGLE

Get shipwrecked?

PLAYWRIGHT

Of course. Hire a yacht and go to the South Sea Islands—Fiji will do. Get shipwrecked—it's very easy to manage. Then, out there, under the open sky and the stars—nature will tell.

SHE-ANGLE

Nature will tell?

PLAYWRIGHT

Why, yes. You'll fight—you (*to HE-ANGLE*) and he. Let the best man win! You'll win—unless you lose. In either case—(*To SHE-ANGLE.*) In either case you'll be satisfied. If your husband wins, you'll find that all along you wanted your husband to win. (*Indicating HE-ANGLE.*) If he wins, you'll be happy to know that the man destiny picked for you won. It's a fine place, the South Seas. You're always satisfied.

SHE-ANGLE

But I don't want to go to the South Seas!

HE-ANGLE

Neither do I. It's too lonely.

PLAYWRIGHT

Ah, no! It isn't lonely any more. The South Seas have become very popular with the people who want to read their Ten Favorite Books and who never

would read them anywhere else. You'd not be lonely—if you enjoy Shakespeare and Walt Whitman.

SHE-ANGLE

I hate Shakespeare, and I hate Walt Whitman! I won't go! A fortune teller once told me I'd die by drowning, and I won't go aboard a ship!

PLAYWRIGHT

Not even to Europe?

SHE-ANGLE

Not even to Europe.

PLAYWRIGHT

How vulgar! (*He walks toward off stage.*) Good day!

SHE-ANGLE

What, are you going?

PLAYWRIGHT

Yes, I'm going. What do you expect me to do? Stay here and be insulted?

HE-ANGLE

Be insulted?

PLAYWRIGHT

Yes, be insulted. When you sent for me, I thought you would follow my advice. I have more to give, but I refuse to have my ideas laughed at. They've always been successful before—they still are in a thousand cases. But you think you're too good, and your husband is too damn healthy, and yourself too superstitious. Good day.

(*He lifts his hat and passes out right. Both HE-ANGLE and SHE-ANGLE look disconsolately after him.*)

SHE-ANGLE

Well?

IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

HE-ANGLE

I didn't say anything.

SHE-ANGLE

Oh!

(*Pause.*)

HE-ANGLE

I told you so!

SHE-ANGLE

What did you tell me?

HE-ANGLE

That a fool playwright wouldn't be any help.

SHE-ANGLE

You didn't!

HE-ANGLE

I did! Now if you'd followed my plan in the first place!

SHE-ANGLE

You didn't have any plan.

HE-ANGLE

I did. You know I did. My friend, the Poet. If you'd only sent for him— He'd be able to help us. A poet's got imagination. That's what we need—imagination. He's got it—my friend, the Poet.

SHE-ANGLE

Why didn't *you* send for him?

HE-ANGLE

I did, even if you wouldn't. I asked him *to come*, and he said he'd be right over.

SHE-ANGLE

Well, why didn't he come?

HE-ANGLE

He'd been here long ago if it hadn't been for that

fool of a playwright. I never liked playwrights anyway. Poets for me every time. They're so practical.

SHE-ANGLE

Well, why doesn't he come?

HE-ANGLE

He probably is here; no doubt he's been here all the time that fool Playwright was here, only I didn't want to have them meet. They don't hitch very well, Poets and Playwrights. At least any more. (*He looks toward PROLOGUE.*) Is the Poet here? (*The PROLOGUE looks off stage right.*)

PROLOGUE

Yes, the Poet is here.

HE-ANGLE

Send him in.

PROLOGUE

I beg your pardon! I'm a Prologue—not a butler. However, I'll call him if you insist. But please address me more respectfully in the future.

HE-ANGLE

I beg your pardon, Prologue. Please call the Poet.

PROLOGUE (*beckoning off stage right*)

Poet.

(*Enter POET from right. He is fat, bald, and of a rosy complexion.*)

POET

Hullo!

HE-ANGLE (*getting off stool*)

Hullo! (*Turns to SHE-ANGLE.*) May I introduce Poet?

SHE-ANGLE (*bowing stiffly*)

How do you do!

(*She is not a bit impressed.*)

IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

Poet

You sent for me?

He-Angle

Yes. As I explained in my letter, we want advice on how to solve our triangle.

Poet

But I'm a Poet. I always was rotten at mathematics.

He-Angle

But this is not a mathematical triangle. (*He gets back on stool.*) You see (*indicating She-Angle*), we're angles.

Poet

Oh, I see! (*To She-Angle.*) He's complimentary, eh, what? Haw!

(*She-Angle sniffs, very much upstage, at the pun.*)

He-Angle

We need your advice. Imagination! It's going to take imagination to get us out of this mess. That's why I sent for you.

Poet

Thank you. Well, then, what have you done?

He-Angle

Nothing.

She-Angle

A Playwright tried to help us, but—

Poet

But couldn't. Of course! Tawdry stuff, I suppose. I know just about what he would suggest. It goes well enough on the stage, but it isn't art.

She-Angle

Ah! Art!

IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

POET

Of course. You want to be artistic, don't you?

SHE-ANGLE (*beginning to melt*)

Yes. Oh, yes!

POET

H'm.

(*Pause.*)

HE-ANGLE

Well?

POET

I didn't say anything.

SHE-ANGLE

Oh!

(*Pause.*)

POET

There's really not much to be done. It's all so simple, really, and all so artistic. Poetry! I tell you there's poetry there.

HE-ANGLE }
SHE-ANGLE } (*together*)

Where?

POET

There.

HE-ANGLE }
SHE-ANGLE } (*together*)

Oh!

POET

Yes, there's poetry there, and art. It's so artistic to suffer.

SHE-ANGLE

To suffer?

IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

POET

Yes, so artistic. A sacrifice on the altar of living love. Oh, divine sacrifice! Oh, the beauty and the art of suffering!

HE-ANGLE

Say, I don't get all that you're raving about, but if you have the idea that we aren't suffering, you're way off. We are. And it may be artistic, but it's damn uncomfortable.

POET

Uncomfortable. Yes. So artistic. The altar of living love. Purple love, deep, mystic, fragrant, yes. So uncomfortable, but so beautiful.

SHE-ANGLE

But I thought you would be able to help us.

POET

Ah, I am able. So able! Already I have envisioned your life. So heroic! So hopeless!

HE-ANGLE

Hopeless?

POET

Yes. Two lives sacrificed on the altar of living, hopeless love. Deathless love, fragrant and so purple!

HE-ANGLE

Come out of it and explain all this nonsense to us! Can you help us escape from this awful three-cornered prison?

POET

Ah, yes, three cornered. The three-cornered prison of love! Fetters forged in the vermillion fire of love. No blue flame to love, but deep vermillion girandoles of passion! So vermillion!

IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

SHE-ANGLE (*she has stood it as long as she can*)
He's mad!

POET (*starting up*)
What?

HE-ANGLE

I sent for you, thinking that with your imagination you would be able to help us. But it seems that you've got too much imagination. Have you any suggestion or haven't you?

POET
Why, of course I have. Haven't I been telling you all along?

SHE-ANGLE
Well, how am I to get rid of my husband?

POET
Ah, madam. You'll not do that. Ah, no! So comfortable but so inartistic.

SHE-ANGLE
Not get rid of him! But what shall I do?

POET
Live. Madam, live—a living sacrifice on the altar of a living love!

SHE-ANGLE
You mean—? You don't mean—?

POET
Yes.

HE-ANGLE
But where do I come in?

POET
Ah, my boy. That is it. You, too, can suffer so beautifully. Eternally! Love is eternity. Love her, my boy, and suffer from afar.

IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

HE-ANGLE

Not marry her?

POET

No, no! Not marry her! That would not be art.
You must deny your love, lock it in your heart and go.

HE-ANGLE

Go where?

POET

That doesn't matter. Just go. In your heart a love
denied. So denied!

HE-ANGLE

But I'm not going. I'm going——

POET

But I thought you said you weren't.

HE-ANGLE

I'm going to marry her!

POET

No! Good Lord, no! Anything but that. Seal up
your hearts with the seals of eternity and deny your
love. There only is Poetry! There only is Art!
Seal up your hearts, I say. But don't marry.

SHE-ANGLE

I will marry him!

POET

You, too! Think of it. Why, you are spoiling your
great opportunity of sacrificing yourself on the altar
of deathless love. You may be *sung*, if you seal
your hearts; but marry, and you'll go and have chil-
dren. Ugh!

SHE-ANGLE

I love children.

IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

POET

Ugh! Deny your purple love, and suffer the eternal pangs of deathless, hopeless yearning. I'll sing you. Why, I've already thought of two new rhymes for love and a beautiful simile. Think of it. Deny your love and have your story told to the world in similes!

SHE-ANGLE

I hate similes!

POET

So heroic! So beautiful! So deathless to deny a hopeless love. Beside it the human sacrifices of golden Chichen-Itza were pale and anemic. I'm holding out to you the straw of immortality.

SHE-ANGLE

I don't want to be immortal. I want children.

POET

Oh, well. Then have your children. But don't, in the name of art and beauty, don't have legitimate children. Legitimate children are so prosy. A poet can't sing of them.

SHE-ANGLE (*feeling her cheeks*)

Oh! Oh! Why, the idea!

HE-ANGLE

Come, now, that's going a bit too far! I don't think you can help us. In fact, I think everything you've said about the most ridiculous rubbish I ever heard.

POET

Rubbish! Fool! Fools! (*He stalks toward left.*) I'm through with you. Love your damn heads off and marry and have children, dozens of them. I hope they're all cross-eyed! Fools!

(*He goes off left angrily. HE-ANGLE and SHE-ANGLE sit on their stools, a picture of resentment and outraged respectability.*)

IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

SHE-ANGLE

I told you so.

HE-ANGLE

What did you tell me?

SHE-ANGLE

I knew he couldn't help us. A poet! He's no poet. Fat and bald. Ugh! I think he ought to be arrested as an impostor. Why, the idea of his talking about illegit—about—ah—children!

HE-ANGLE

And I thought he was a friend of mine! I always liked poetry, too.

SHE-ANGLE

Deny our love! Live and suffer! I don't believe he knows what love is. Or life either. And then those—children!

(She feels her cheeks again. Pause while both sit thoughtfully.)

HE-ANGLE

Well?

SHE-ANGLE

I didn't say anything.

HE-ANGLE

Oh!

(Pause.)

SHE-ANGLE

But what are we to *do*?

HE-ANGLE

I don't know. This is an awful mess. Maybe Poet is right and we'll have to go on as we are—just angles.

SHE-ANGLE

He isn't right! and I won't go on just being an angle.

IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

HE-ANGLE

But what are we going to do?

SHE-ANGLE

I'm sure I don't know—yet. But we'll find a way.
(Pause while they both seem to concentrate.)

SHE-ANGLE

I have it!

HE-ANGLE

What?

SHE-ANGLE

Why didn't we think of it before?

HE-ANGLE

What?

SHE-ANGLE

Why, Prologue! Why don't we ask Prologue?

HE-ANGLE

That's right. Why didn't we?

SHE-ANGLE

Oh, Prologue!

(PROLOGUE, who has been leaning half asleep on his trumpet, turns to the ANGLES.)

PROLOGUE

Yes?

SHE-ANGLE

We want your help. We need your advice.

PROLOGUE

Oh, no!

SHE-ANGLE

What do you mean?

PROLOGUE

I mean you're not going to drag me into this mess.

IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

I'm a Prologue and don't know anything about Angles—any more than I do about playing this trumpet. We Prologues have a lot to contend with these days. They make us do all sorts of things—even to shifting scenery at times. But so far they have kept us out of scandals, and I'm not going to start in, as old as I am, getting into such scrapes.

SHE-ANGLE

But, Prologue, we don't want you to get into any scrapes. We only want you to give us advice on how to solve the triangle.

PROLOGUE

Oh, yes, that's all you want me to do. But say, haven't I seen plays before? Haven't I seen innocent bystanders dragged into such messes as this, even into the divorce courts, just because of a little good advice given at the wrong time.

SHE-ANGLE

But this is the right time.

PROLOGUE

How can I be sure of that? Besides, as I said before, I'm the Prologue and not an information bureau or ways and means committee.

(He turns back to the side of the proscenium where he has been standing.)

HE-ANGLE

Don't give us any advice, Prologue. But haven't you any suggestions?

PROLOGUE

No!— Why, yes, I'll give you a suggestion. Why don't you try the audience?

HE-ANGLE

The—the audience?

IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

PROLOGUE

Yes. Why don't you try them? Maybe there is a novelist among them.

SHE-ANGLE

Oh, fine! Maybe there is! Ask them, Prologue, do! I know an Author can help us!

PROLOGUE (*turning to audience*)

Is there an Author in the audience? (*Pause.*) A Novelist?

AUTHOR (*rising somewhere in the audience*)

Yes. I'm a Novelist. (*He comes forward.*) I've been thinking it was about time some one with a little brains took a hand in these proceedings. I'll be glad to help you.

PROLOGUE

Come right up, Author.

(*AUTHOR goes up on the stage.*)

PROLOGUE (*to ANGLES*)

Here is your Author.

(*Turns back to his original post.*)

AUTHOR

You know, I feel very sorry for you people, not because of the mess you're in but because of the way you tried to get out of it.

HE-ANGLE

What do you mean?

AUTHOR

Why, calling on a playwright and a poet. What good did you ever think they could possibly do you? I'm suspicious of them, particularly playwrights. I once had a novel, one of my best, adapted for the stage. (*He throws up his hands.*) You should have seen it when that playwright got through with it!

IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

I wouldn't have recognized it myself. Only the title remained the same.

SHE-ANGLE

But they're usually very good in triangles.

AUTHOR (*sniffing*)

Oh, yes. They know how to invent them, but they fail utterly in solving them satisfactorily. Why, not so long ago a very prominent playwright put two triangles together and tried to pass it off as a circle, but they remained triangles. It might be good dialogue, but it's poor mathematics.

HE-ANGLE

Do you think you can help us?

AUTHOR

My boy, I'm sure of it. Of course, it's largely up to you. If you're willing to take sound advice, I know I can help you. I've solved many triangles in my time. That's the kind of novel I have always written, and I always see to it that there's a good moral attached. So do you feel it safe to listen to me?

SHE-ANGLE

Oh, yes! (*To HE-ANGLE.*) I'm sure he's going to be able to help us!

AUTHOR

Now then. The first thing you're to do is to send for your husband and tell him all about it.

SHE-ANGLE

Tell him! Oh, I can't do that!

AUTHOR

Yes, you must tell him. Now twenty years ago you would not have been able to do that, but now—all is different. Twenty years ago it would have meant a

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duel or a murder. To-day, however, husbands are different. I suppose we novelists are really responsible for the change. Realism has done it. Realism has made men realize that man and wife are two separate and individual entities. The wife, man now realizes, has a right to lead her own life as she chooses. And he accepts it. Realism has done it!

SHE-ANGLE

But my husband doesn't.

AUTHOR

Doesn't what?

SHE-ANGLE

Accept it. He doesn't believe it. He wouldn't allow it!

AUTHOR

But how do you know unless you try him? I am willing to stake my reputation as a Novelist that he would be amenable to argument.

SHE-ANGLE

But he hates arguments. I never could even argue with him over the price of a hat.

AUTHOR

Besides, perhaps he, too, is tired.

SHE-ANGLE

Tired of what?

AUTHOR

Of—of marriage.

SHE-ANGLE

Oh! of marriage. Of me, you mean?

AUTHOR

That is putting it very bluntly. But, since you put it that way—yes.

SHE-ANGLE (*turning to HE-ANGLE*)

Oh!

HE-ANGLE

See here! What are you trying to insinuate?

AUTHOR

I'm not trying to insinuate anything. My dear man, I am simply appealing to your sense of justice. It is not unreasonable to conceive of a mutual feeling of surfeit arising in man and wife. That has frequently been the case, as you will realize if you read the popular novel. We novelists were among the first to recognize it. It will soon be put on the stage.

SHE-ANGLE

I'm sure he isn't tired of me.

AUTHOR

Of you—probably not. But of marriage and its restrictions—yes, perhaps.

HE-ANGLE

But, suppose he were tired of marriage. What good would all this be?

AUTHOR

You should be able to come to some arrangement. Divorce, perhaps.

SHE-ANGLE

I hate divorce! It's so vulgar!

AUTHOR

Oh, not any more. It's really very smart.

SHE-ANGLE

I don't like it!

AUTHOR

Well, I don't know how you're going to get out of this mess if you won't listen to divorce. There's no

chance of your husband's dying you told the playwright. There are only two other ways out.

SHE-ANGLE

And what are they?

AUTHOR

Murder and free love. I don't suppose you'll commit murder?

SHE-ANGLE (*shrinking*)

Oh, no! Murder my husband!

AUTHOR

It's not so very bad. Really, murder may be so committed that it is neither vulgar nor sinful.

SHE-ANGLE

Not sinful!

AUTHOR

Of course not. Murder is not necessarily sinful. It is held to be so only as a matter of convenience and because people have a naïve way of speaking of one's having a right to live. After all, no one has any real right except to die. Murder is not considered sinful even by so-called moralists if it be done for a patriotic reason as in war. To ease your conscience, then, can't you think of a patriotic reason why your husband should die? Does he obey the laws?

SHE-ANGLE

Why, yes, I think so. At least as much as any one does. But let's not discuss that. I won't murder him and I won't have him murdered!

AUTHOR

Well then. Free love?

SHE-ANGLE

But that certainly is sinful!

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AUTHOR

Oh, no! How old-fashioned you are!

SHE-ANGLE

Well, I don't care if I am old-fashioned. I'm not going to do anything that my conscience says is wrong!

AUTHOR

Well, all I have to say is that you're a queer pair. You've been unconventional enough to go and fall in love. That does not seem to you to be wrong, but you balk at divorce, murder, and free love. I'm sure I don't see any help for you. What you need is not a Novelist or a Playwright or a Poet, but a Psychiatrist. Good day!

(*He goes out at left.*)

SHE-ANGLE

What a disagreeable man!

HE-ANGLE

Realism did it!

SHE-ANGLE

I don't believe he's much of an Author.

HE-ANGLE

Trash is all he writes, probably.

SHE-ANGLE

Free love!

HE-ANGLE

Murder!

(*An ACTRESS rises somewhere in the audience.*)

ACTRESS

Let me help you!

SHE-ANGLE

Who is that?

ACTRESS (*coming toward stage*)

I know I can help you if you'll let me. I know just how you feel.

(PROLOGUE *assists her to the stage.*)

PROLOGUE

And your name?

ACTRESS

I'm an Actress.

PROLOGUE (*to SHE-ANGLE*)

She's an Actress.

SHE-ANGLE (*to HE-ANGLE*)

She's an Actress.

HE-ANGLE

An Actress!

ACTRESS (*going to SHE-ANGLE at once sympathetic and patronizing and always fully realizing that she is going to have an opportunity to hold the center of the stage:*)

You poor dear, I know how you feel. I know.

SHE-ANGLE

I've suffered much.

ACTRESS

I know. I know.

HE-ANGLE

Can you help us?

ACTRESS (*turning to him; every movement is deliberate, studied*)

Yes.

HE-ANGLE

I'm sure you can.

ACTRESS

Yes.

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SHE-ANGLE

My husband, you know—

ACTRESS

I know.

SHE-ANGLE

How can you help us?

ACTRESS

Ah, you must be deft. You must be subtle. But not too subtle.

SHE-ANGLE

But, go on!

ACTRESS

It is all so very simple. First you must decide what you want. Do you want to marry your lover?

SHE-ANGLE

Yes.

ACTRESS

Do you want that most of all?

SHE-ANGLE

Yes, most of all.

ACTRESS

Then you must realize there is only one solution—divorce. As the Author says it is very smart. It is not vulgar unless the husband gets it. If the wife gets it, divorce is quite all right. Of course, murder is all right if you're a tragedienne. Are you a tragedienne?

SHE-ANGLE

I can't act!

ACTRESS

Then it must be divorce and you must be the one to

obtain it. That is very simple. Your husband loves you? Yes?

SHE-ANGLE

I'm sure of it!

ACTRESS

Yes. I know! Yes, your husband loves you. You must, however, show him that your love for him has died, that you love another and that you must either marry this other man or be his mistress.

SHE-ANGLE

Oh!

ACTRESS

I know how you feel. I know.

SHE-ANGLE

But I can't do that!

ACTRESS

Oh, yes, you can. You must only be deft. You must act. You must show him how you suffer.

SHE-ANGLE

But how?

ACTRESS

I shall show you. We shall have a rehearsal now. I shall be you, and your lover will be your husband. You must watch me carefully. Then you do as I do.

SHE-ANGLE

Ah, I see.

ACTRESS (*going up toward HE-ANGLE*)

I shall call him John. It need not be his name, but it will do in rehearsal. Besides, I like simple names in emotional scenes. Monosyllables are best. They're so tense when used alone. (*Turning again toward HE-ANGLE.*) You must help me now. I want you

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to do just the things and say the things you would if you were really John. John!

HE-ANGLE

Yes, dear.

ACTRESS

I have something to say to you, John dear.

HE-ANGLE

Yes, dear?

(ACTRESS sits on stool beside HE-ANGLE. She sits impassive, tense.)

ACTRESS

Won't you sit down?

(HE-ANGLE sits.)

ACTRESS

How long have we been married, John?

HE-ANGLE

Why, five years, dear. Why?

ACTRESS

We've been very happy, haven't we, John?

HE-ANGLE

I don't know what you mean!

ACTRESS

We've been happy, haven't we? That is all.

HE-ANGLE

Yes, dear. But—

ACTRESS

You've loved me, John?

HE-ANGLE

Always.

ACTRESS

You still love me, John?

(HE-ANGLE wavers a little. He feels that this is getting a bit deep.)

ACTRESS

Don't be bashful. Remember this is only a rehearsal. Put your arms around me and kiss me. John would. (HE-ANGLE is not unwilling, but the presence of SHE-ANGLE disturbs him somewhat, particularly as the latter is beginning to lose interest in the technical side of the rehearsal and to resent the liberties the ACTRESS is taking with her lover.)

ACTRESS

Do as I say or I can't go on. Do you still love me, John?

HE-ANGLE (*taking her in his arms with a mixture of contentment and apprehension, he kisses her*)

There, dear. Does that answer your question?

ACTRESS

I'm afraid it does.

HE-ANGLE

Afraid?

ACTRESS

Yes, John, afraid.

HE-ANGLE (*in the spirit of the play*)

But why do you say that?

ACTRESS

Oh, John. I don't know how I can ever tell you.

HE-ANGLE

Tell me what?

ACTRESS (*parenthetically*)

Oh, you're doing fine. Tell you that—

HE-ANGLE

Yes?

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ACTRESS

Oh, John, I no longer love you

HE-ANGLE

What?

ACTRESS

Oh, John. It's true. Kill me! Do anything with me! I don't deserve your love! I'm unworthy of you. Kill me!

HE-ANGLE

You don't love me!

ACTRESS

Kill me. Oh, John, it's too true, too terribly true. Would to God I had died before I met you. Then you would be saved this. Kill me, John!

HE-ANGLE (*putting his hands firmly on her shoulders and looking her in the eyes*)

What do you mean?

ACTRESS (*hanging her head*)

Oh, John, you're making it very hard for me. I—I love another.

HE-ANGLE

You're not telling me the truth!

ACTRESS

I never was more serious in my life, John.

HE-ANGLE

You love another!

ACTRESS

I don't know why I'm telling you all this.

HE-ANGLE

You love another!

ACTRESS

But I love you, too. Honestly, I love you. But in a

different sort of way. I'll always love you, John. You've been so fair to me.

HE-ANGLE (*taking her suddenly in his arms and kissing her passionately*)

It's a lie. Darling, say it's a lie!

(*He kisses her again. SHE-ANGLE does not like it. She jumps to her feet.*)

SHE-ANGLE (*coldly*)

That will do!

(*HE-ANGLE and ACTRESS both turn toward her.*)

SHE-ANGLE

That will be enough.

ACTRESS

But we're not nearly through yet!

SHE-ANGLE

That is what I was afraid of. But I do not think I require any more instruction. I have learned much already.

ACTRESS

But what about the rest?

SHE-ANGLE

There isn't going to be any rest.

ACTRESS

What do you mean?

SHE-ANGLE

I mean that I am quite capable of settling my domestic problems without any assistance from the theatrical profession.

ACTRESS

Why! Why!

SHE-ANGLE

I know. I know.

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ACTRESS

Of all the insults! Goodness knows, I didn't want to interfere in your business.

SHE-ANGLE

Well, no one asked you to!

ACTRESS

You did. You appealed to the audience.

SHE-ANGLE

I didn't! All I asked of the audience was a Novelist. I didn't ask for a chorus girl.

ACTRESS

A chorus girl! I'll have you sued for slander, you silly, ignorant doll, you. A chorus girl! You free-lover! You, you mistress!

(ACTRESS stalks off right.)

HE-ANGLE

I don't see why you did that!

SHE-ANGLE (*sarcastically*)

No, of course you don't. Certainly not!

HE-ANGLE

She isn't a chorus girl.

SHE-ANGLE

How do you know she isn't?

HE-ANGLE

Well, I just know. She didn't look like one, for one thing.

SHE-ANGLE (*too agreeable*)

I thought she did, but I see I was mistaken. I shall not argue with an authority.

HE-ANGLE

What do you mean?

SHE-ANGLE

I dare say you know a great deal about chorus girls, and—and actresses. I can readily see that you are very familiar with the looks and actions of that kind of people. I understand perfectly now how you were able to carry your part so well, I —

HE-ANGLE

Stop!

SHE-ANGLE

I shall not stop! What right have you to tell me to stop? As I was saying before you so rudely lost your temper, I quite realize that in all probability it was not your first scene with an Actress.

HE-ANGLE

I say—!

SHE-ANGLE

You have said quite enough. Quite too much, in fact. It is all very plain to me that your intimacy with chorus girls and soubrettes has stood you in good stead to-day. I am glad to have learned that before I took some rash step. I am very glad to be able to say that whatever may be my husband's faults, he has never frequented stage doors.

HE-ANGLE

What in Heaven's name has come over you? Are you insane?

SHE-ANGLE

That's right! Call me names. Strike me! That is all there is left to do!

HE-ANGLE (*he goes up to her and makes her face him*)

You know everything you have said is damned foolishness. You know you had no basis for such a scene.

SHE-ANGLE (*in a rage*)

No basis! No basis! To see you take another woman, a painted woman probably from a burlesque chorus, to see you take her into your arms, burning with passion, your eyes dilated, your cheeks flushed, your whole being mad with unholy love. No basis, do you say? To see you do that while still my lover! What would it be if you were married to me—if you were my husband! Oh, I have been blind! I have a husband who has at least the grace to carry on his amours behind my back, if he does carry on any. And I would have changed him for you! Oh, I have been blind! Go!

HE-ANGLE

But—

SHE-ANGLE

Go! Go! Do not stay another moment! Here comes my husband. I hear him outside. If you don't go I shall have him kill you.

HE-ANGLE

Darling—

SHE-ANGLE

Don't use that word to me! Go!

HE-ANGLE

You must listen.

SHE-ANGLE

I shall scream!

(*The HUSBAND-ANGLE enters.*)

HUSBAND-ANGLE

Hello, Darling. (To HE-ANGLE.) How are you?

SHE-ANGLE

He's just hurrying away—to meet the dearest actress in the world who has been here to call.

(HE-ANGLE *gives her an ugly look.*)

IT'S TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED

HE-ANGLE

Good-by.

SHE-ANGLE (*too sweet*)

Good-by!

HUSBAND-ANGLE

Good-by.

(HE-ANGLE *goes.*)

HUSBAND-ANGLE

I've got two seats for a good show to-night, dear.

It's a problem play. Wonderful actress.

SHE-ANGLE (*kisses him*)

Oh, you darling! I love actresses.

CURTAIN

(PROLOGUE gathers his trumpet sleepily under his arm. He has been half asleep during the later action of the play. He looks at the audience in some confusion and starts to go through the curtains.)

PROLOGUE

I've got to hurry or I'll be an Epilogue. That wasn't so hard to settle, was it? Thank you.

(He goes within the curtains.)

(1)

THE END



